

“Resolving technical infrastructure disparities in wide-area, cross-border geographical zones to deliver effective training modules.”

THEME: Access and Success in Learning: Global Development Perspectives

Sub Theme 3: Skills Development

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INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL AWARD

The International Award is an exciting self-development programme aimed at young people aged between 14 and 25. The philosophy of the Award is about experiential learning and individual challenge, empowering young people to make a difference to their lives. The Award is divided into four sections which provide opportunities for (i) conservation or voluntary work (ii) undertaking an adventurous journey (iii) developing personal interests and practical or vocational skills and (iv) encouraging physical activity. Each young person's Award Programme is a unique combination that reflects his or her personal interests and motivations. Participants can work towards Awards at Bronze, Silver and Gold Levels.

There are currently over 785,000 young people taking part in the Award worldwide. The Award currently operates in 131 countries – 60 on a national level. The International Award Association (IAA) is responsible for establishing the Award in new countries and for maintaining and monitoring the delivery of the Award worldwide. The vision of the IAA is for the International Award to become regarded as the programme of choice for young people.

The Award began in 1956 in the UK, where it is known as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Over the last 54 years it has spread across the globe, because the philosophy and the format have proved attractive and adaptable to many cultures.

The Award enables young people to demonstrate self-development within an internationally recognised framework. The non-formal educational network can complement formal education and offers a substitute where formal opportunities are not available. The Award provides access to an international network of youth development expertise, training capacity and best practice.

Through contributing to skills development, the Award can significantly enhance a country's human resource development and support its national development goals.

ASIA PACIFIC REGION

The Asia Pacific Regional Office is based in Sydney Australia and represents the Duke of Edinburgh's Award International Association across this large and diverse region, home to a youth population of 650 million - over 60 per cent of the world youth population (UNFPA).

During the last decade, the Award has developed rapidly around the region with over 350,000 young people currently participating in 30 countries. Over the past three years, new entrants have increased by almost 30% and there is huge scope to develop the youth potential in the region.

In the region there are currently 3,000 schools, universities, colleges, youth groups and organisations, employers, young offender institutions and special needs groups licensed as Award Operators. They are supported by a network of over 100,000 volunteers and leaders.

By assuring the quality of the Award and its delivery worldwide, every young person who undertakes the Award is given the same opportunity to challenge themselves and develop their talents. Quality assurance incorporates a range of elements, including strategic planning, leadership and research, but the cornerstone to the continued success of the Award is training.

One of the most significant factors in how a young person experiences the Award, and what outcome it leads to, is the Award leader. Moreover, being able to increase the number of trained Award leaders is fundamental to the Award's global expansion, as without more volunteers to deliver the Award we cannot meet demand from young people. Given this crucial role played by Award leaders, the IAA must invest in ensuring that they are equipped to deliver the Award in a high quality, consistent way.

CURRENT APPROACHES TO AWARD LEADER TRAINING IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

To ensure the network of volunteers and leaders who are providing young people with the opportunities to experience a high quality of Award programme it is essential that these volunteers and leaders, have exposure to a high quality Award leader training.

The most effective way to achieve this is for the volunteers to complete an Award leader training workshop. These workshops have generally been presented as a face to face training for groups of 15 to 30 participants for at least one full day.

During 2010 the Asia Pacific Regional Office will have trained over 500 leaders from 13 countries in over 23 workshops. These Award leader training workshops have been delivered predominately in English, although on occasions interpreters were used to deliver training in Tetum (spoken in Timor Leste) and Bahasa Indonesia, or in the case of a training workshop with deaf participants, a signing interpreter.

The Asia Pacific Regional Office is faced with a number of challenges to ensure the Award's accessibility to meet the International Secretariat's strategic plan to grow the Award to over 1 million participants internationally by 2015.

Statistical evidence has shown that after an Award leader has been trained, they will engage about 20 new young people in the Award. Given that over 500 new Award Leaders have been trained during 2010 these leaders will enrol 10,000 new young people in the Award. Even if the Asia Pacific Regional Office had the financial resources to double, triple or quadruple the number of training workshops offered, new participants would only increase arithmetically.

There has been a strong demand for training workshops by already licensed organisations to ensure the quality of their Award leaders and to provide opportunities for new leaders to be trained to compensate for the natural attrition rates that occur when Award leaders change employment or living circumstances.

New organisations wanting to join the Award are requesting opportunities to have their volunteers trained as Award leaders. Often in developing countries the cost and the logistics of attending scheduled Award leader training workshops in other provinces or states within their country or neighboring countries is prohibitive. Logistically it is not necessarily a viable prospect to for the Asia Pacific Regional Office to provide this training in country where the group may be small.

International experience has also shown that for a successful Award programme to be established in a new organisation it requires a champion, an identifiable individual whose personal involvement will make the Award happen. It has been evident that in these successful Award programmes the champion is almost always a national of the new country rather than an expatriate trying to introduce the Award. Expanding the Award into all regions of highly populated and geographically challenging countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines will require training to be delivered in a number of languages in addition to English. It is also timely for the Award to consider how Information and Communications Technology (ICT) can be harnessed to better service the International Secretariat's strategic growth plan.

COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES IN THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF AWARD LEADER TRAINING.

The International Award leader training programmes have traditionally been conducted using printed documents delivered in face to face training situations. This is an expensive and increasingly unsustainable as the Award seeks to spread its programmes in all continents and often into small and in some cases isolated communities. In addition to new countries the Award is also focused on expanding the programme within existing National Award Authorities (NAA's). Being able to increase the number of trained Award leaders is essential for global growth as without these Award champions the demand from young people for the Award cannot be met.

Young people who are the target for participation are increasingly growing up in an internet connected world and many are growing up with an expectation that they will be able to get information where and when they want as quickly as possible. One of the challenges for Award leaders is to deliver training in ways that both engage and encourage the involvement of young people. The technology of the internet and the World Wide Web is considered by young people as the new "normal". Both trainers and Award leaders need to accept this reality. This may be challenging and require new learning and technical skills upgrading of the trainers and Award leaders

The most expensive factor in the current delivery mechanism for training Award leaders is sending regional trainers to conduct face to face training in country. Training is done in a workshop setting and the language of instruction when undertaken is usually English when facilitated by the Asia Pacific regional office for IAYP is in Sydney. The office employs only one training manager for a region that extends across 30 countries.

Indonesia is the largest country in South East Asia with a population of 230 million people spread over more than 2000 islands. Its national language, Bahasa Indonesia, was only introduced at the time of independence after the Second World War. In Indonesia the Award is proving increasingly popular with young people however servicing demand requires increasing the number of training programmes for Award leaders. This Training of Trainers will then establish a pool of trainers who can move out into the various island provinces and help address the national growth strategy.

Timor Leste, formerly the disputed province of East Timor in Eastern Indonesia and prior to that a Portuguese colonial territory provides us with an example of difficult logistics, as well as linguistic and technical infrastructure challenges. The country is poorly serviced by international airlines and its mountainous geography makes domestic travel slow and difficult. There are 4 languages spoken Portuguese, Tetum, Bahasa Indonesia and English with familiarity based on peoples educational background and on which part of the country they are from. Power supplies are erratic making internet connections unreliable and poverty makes access to ICT technology limited.

Language

The Award family covers a wide range of the world's popular languages but also includes minority languages such as Tetum referred to above, spoken by small numbers of people in isolated island communities.

Award training modules at the Asia Pacific Regional Office are currently all in English and so in order to connect with the audience in non English speaking countries training materials may need to be translated into languages other than English, in particular Hindi and Mandarin.

Where required training programmes need to make use of a skilled simultaneous translator for workshops and seminars. This requires those regional Award offices or the National Award Authority to source accurate professional translations and cost effective printing solutions. In the case of translation of Award leader and participant training materials, the process of training

implementation may be slow. Award training delivery may also be slow due to the need for step by step translation.

The Digital Divide

We know that the world is shrinking due to the impact and influence of the internet which is now spreading its tentacles to all continents and communities using a combination of fibre, wireless and satellite connections. We also know that there is still a digital divide between rich and poor countries and that this digital divide has an impact on the ability of the Award to harness the new digital technology. What is also increasingly obvious is the way in which mobile phone technology is being used to leapfrog over the desk top computer and personal laptop communications model and to deliver the internet directly to mobile phone users across all continents and countries.

We also have to address our own human resources training needs; Award leader training is undertaken by people with varied levels of internet and World Wide Web interest, access and experience, as well as various levels of familiarity and ability in using internet and web based training solutions. What then might be the future opportunities to utilise digital technology to provide greater efficiency and streamlining of Award delivery.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO UTILISE DIGITAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD TRAINING.

The development of digital media in the last 20 years has been phenomenal and today all corners of the world are connected to the internet and World Wide Web using wireless, satellite or cable connections. Internet connection speeds are getting faster and the cost of computers and mobile phones is getting cheaper.

Digital media platforms have more recently migrated from computers to mobile phones. The growth of mobile internet users has been rapid and there is an increasing untapped market of people who are keen to get on-line access. In developing countries such as Indonesia which spans vast geographical distances and terrains, only 10% of the population (23 million out of 230 million) currently has access to the Web and 60% of these or 13.8 million have access via mobile phones. What we are beginning to see is the mobile phone companies investing heavily in growing this new market segment who are bypassing desk based and lap top computers and moving directly online using mobile phone technology.

Joint research by Yahoo and Taylor Neson Sofres, a research firm, has shown a 35% growth in internet users in major Indonesian cities over a 12 month period 2009-2010. Smaller cities are showing similar growth patterns that are driving internet providers and mobile phone companies to make increasing investments to supply a demand that seems unstoppable. This phenomenon is evident in all countries and is having a major impact on how people get information, how they communicate with each other and the speed with which they expect to receive information.

CURRENT AWARD APPROACHES TO ONLINE RESOURCING

The availability and use of the internet makes it essential for the Award to harness technology to address the issues of Award Leader Training, Global Mentoring, Regional Office Communication, Award Participant Communication as well as Conferences, Workshops and Seminars. The Award is now connected through its website www.intaward.org and by having its own Facebook page and Twittering its way around the world.

In 2009 the Australian Award launched an Online Record Book (ORB) which is allowing young people to log on and manage their Award journey through an online interface no matter where they are in urban, metropolitan or remote and regional communities. They are able to connect with their mentor and seek any assistance needed as they navigate along the path of the Award journey. As

the ORB model matures it will integrate online, email, mobile phones and popular social networking communities.

PILOTING A NEW APPROACH TO AWARD LEADER TRAINING

In 2010 the Asia Pacific Regional Office began to develop a pilot on line Award Training Module in cooperation with the Digital Media and Training Division of AFG Venture Group based in Sydney see www.afgventuregroup.com

The brief for pilot required addressing the following Technical and Translation Challenges:

1. Technical Issues: the wide range of technical infrastructure expected from fast broadband delivered by cable wireless and satellite to slow dial and limited connectivity.
2. Localisation; the need for translation and cultural variations and the need to handle these issues with cross cultural sensitivity;
3. Developing an online platform that provides the essential experience of the Award and not just "learn and repeat "data driven linear learning;
4. Connecting the global base of participants;
5. Ensuring a robust administrative interface;
6. Training that is "open-flow"-trainer to student, student to trainer, student to student, student to trainer to the wider resources of the internet.
7. Developing both mobile and off-line access to the training

The following were the main Design and Development Challenges:

1. Choice of a suitable learning approach and methodology: How the participant will learn, how they advance through the topics, how they interact with the materials and how they are assessed;
2. Choice of platforms, programming and tools: Which Internet tools and programming languages best suit the objectives? How much media should be included and of what types e.g. audio, video, photo? Will social networks be included? What are the best vehicles for student participation and to develop student generated content safely and securely and within IAYP guidelines? How can we enable a social learning network that will establish the series of community and experience necessary for the training whilst remaining aware of the need to deliver the formal elements of the training?
3. Design and Interface considerations: How will the user interact with the materials? How will navigation work? How will the various resources be cataloged and made available through the navigation systems, searching or both.
4. Development Phase- developing a modular system for the core materials. Developing an interconnected set of tools for supporting the learning and engendering a sense of community, shared experience and shared contribution via blogs, wikis, the resource library, glossary, chat, messaging, and video walls. Developing the back end including assessment, user monitoring and statistics for global tracking.
5. Testing Phase: Testing the pilot with trainers and participants in the field.
6. Monitoring Feedback and Refinement

CONCLUSION AND UPDATE

To satisfy the learning requirements and the technical challenges, the systems and e-learning architecture being developed represent both the capacity for flexible access to the training across the perceived technical spectrum whilst allowing the user to leverage a very wide range of formal, informal and social learning tools.

We have placed the Award leader trainee firmly at the centre of the learning and teaching experience where they will not only access materials provided by Award staff but also contribute UGC (User Generated Content) resources to the available 'bank' of learning materials and teaching materials.

Allowing the participant to fully engage in the learning as well as the teaching and 'support' (of other participants) processes will increase a sense of the 'learning community', develop the basis for experiential and shared learning, reinforce the goals of the training and provide a level of creative and social engagement for the participant that would not be possible given a traditional e-learning model.

The model also allows for the development of creative thinking, awareness raising, and constructivist transformational learning (as opposed to simply absorbing and repeating knowledge chunks) than a standard e-learning system.

Figure 1 shows how the participant is placed at the centre of the experience and can easily 'reach out' to a wide variety of media types and delivery types as well as to broader Internet based resources and to community, shared and UGC resources. The learning network is a managed system (by IAA) as well as a self-managed (by the participant) and community managed (by all participating users and Award staff) system.

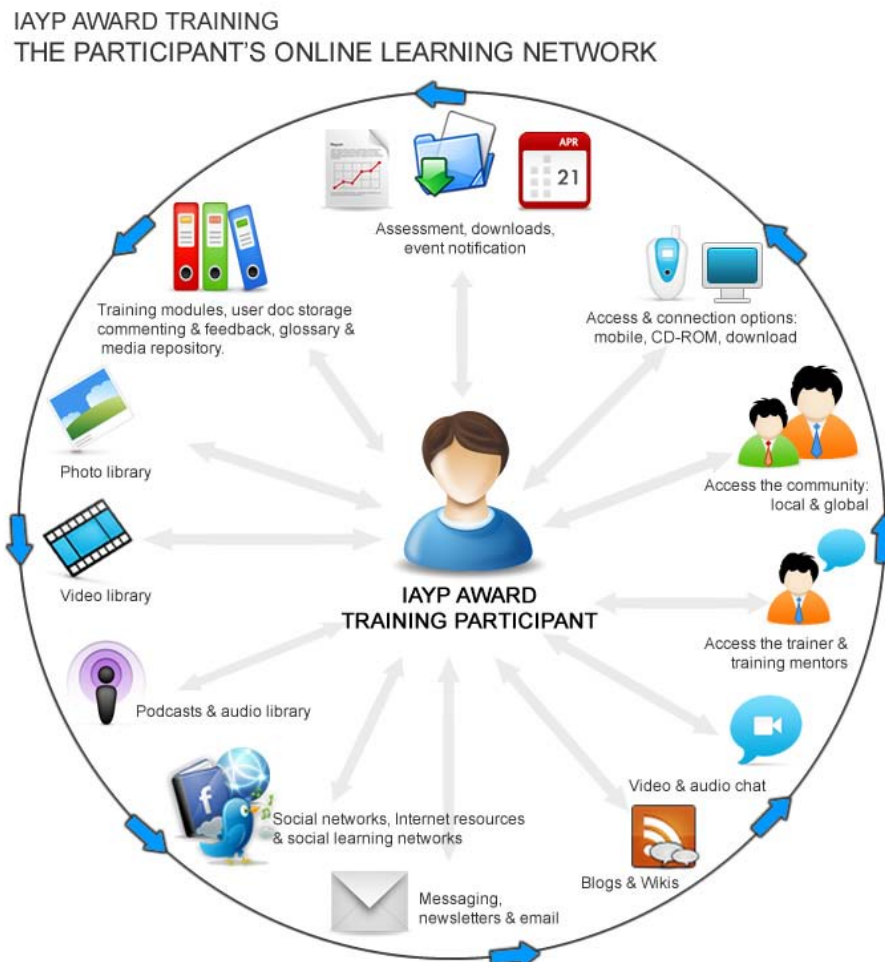


Figure 1: The Participant's Online Learning Network

For IAA administration the framework also offers a set of global and local online administrative tools that can provide collated data on a wide-range of variables. These statistics will be instrumental in providing the feedback for the on-going design and development for the training as well as easy-to-access and very accurate statistical information concerning the participants.

The participant also has an online administration area where he or she can track their progress, review notes, upload/download documents and digital media, request technical or learning support and receive messages, event notices and emails from other participants or Award staff.

The Award Leader Training programme is both ambitious and innovative in its scope. Although initially being developed for the Award Leader Training it has been specifically designed to be able to accommodate any type of Award training (formal, informal, just-in-time) and can be adapted to any training requirement. In the future we look forward to developing on line training in Languages Other than English (LOTE) which would likely include Hindi and Mandarin.

In this, the International Year of Youth, with it's theme of *Dialogue and Mutual Understanding*, there is an important opportunity through this initiative to develop new skills and training opportunities which can contribute to inter-cultural dialogue and advancing global youth and development agendas.